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IN THIS ISSUE

Ralph W. Sockman
Madison Avenue Methodist Church, New York City
"The Divine at the Door"

William Pierson Merrill
Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City
"Going Through With God"

Albert W. Palmer
President Chicago Theological Seminary
(Formerly First Congregational Church, Oak Park, Ills.)
"Are You Saved?"

Richard Roberts
Sherbourne United Church, Toronto, Canada
"The Theologian Interviews Jesus"

Willard B. Thorp
Congregational Church, Palo Alto, Calif.
"Automatic Justice"

Herman F. Reissig
West End Congregational Church, Bridgeport, Conn.
"Thinking It Through"

Henry Sloane Coffin
President Union Theological Seminary, New York City
"The Home of the Soul"

1131
170

The Divine at the Door

BY RALPH W. SOCKMAN

Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst. John 20:26.

Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him. Revelation 3:20.

THERE are two New Testament pictures of Christ which interest me when viewed together. One is that scene eight days after Easter when the disheartened disciples were huddled in a Jerusalem house. The doors were closed. The hostile world was locked out. They would guard against any intrusion into their intimate circle. Then we read: "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst." On this occasion closed doors were no barrier to the risen Christ.

The other picture is that drawn for us by the writer of Revelation. It is an interpretation of Christ which has haunted men's hearts through the ages. Holman Hunt has left on canvas the unforgettable figure of the Christ standing at the door knocking. A crown of thorns is on his head, a lantern in his hand, and a look of gentle, winsome entreaty on his face, as he listens for the welcoming response within. The words which that portrait of Hunt illumines are these: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." Here seems to be a closed door which Christ respects.

How is it that some shut doors do not keep Christ out while others do? That is the question which arouses my inquiry.

The first conclusion which my mind reaches is that Christ can not be kept out of any situation. "Jesus

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cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst." So he always does. The principles which Christ revealed are as inescapable as the principles revealed by the falling stone. The doors of a situation can no more be locked against his laws than they can be locked against the laws of gravity. That sounds like one of the superlatives to which the pulpit is addicted. But let us look at it.

Christ Can Not Be Kept Out

Consider the situation of the home. A young husband and wife bind themselves together to build a home. They are strong, capable, self-sufficient. A good income guarantees their union against the inroads of want. They love each other, and are loyal to each other, but they will indulge in no sentimental talk about the sanctity of marriage vows or the necessity of vicarious sacrifice. They are going to be under no illusions about this matter of love. It is a natural human thing, an attraction physical and mental. It is normal to desire children and they will rear a family. They have money to give the children excellent schooling, healthy bodies, good times. Nothing else seems to be needed. The family circle seems a completed whole. The doors are shut against the intrusions of religion. Religion does not appear necessary. Moreover it seems to cast a kind of chilling shadow over normal activities. So this family will have none of it. No gloomy shadows, no pious repressions for them.

But how long can that family, or any other, keep its doors closed against the entrance of arresting ideas about vicarious suffering or a higher life, about the ultimate meanings and ends of living? Let the answer come from Edith Wharton, who knows the ways of the world far better than the pulpit is supposed to know them. She has recently described deftly the home of a society woman, a home with every physical comfort and a most comfortable philosophy. The mother, a healthy, vital woman immersed in a round of social activities, was resolved to hear no evil, see no evil, think no evil. But Edith Wharton says that it was as if the demons of sorrow and evil which middle-aged mothers were determined to evade were casting their hungry shadows on the young.

> After all, somebody in every family has to remember now and then that such things as wickedness, suffering and death had not yet been banished from the earth; and with all those bright-complexioned white-haired mothers mailed in massage and optimism, and behaving as if they had never heard of anything but the Good and the Beautiful, perhaps their children had to serve as vicarious sacrifices.

And that is precisely what the daughter of this home had to do. It was she who saw the castle of that home's security crumbling. It was she who felt the bullet aimed at another. No, we may close our homes against all callers from the church, against all references to religion, but we can not close them against Christ, for Christ comes since the days of his fleshly departure in the form of that "other Comforter," the "Spirit of Truth," which convicts the world in respect "of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." Those convictions do eventually creep in. They come in various ways. Sometimes dramatically in the derelictions of an untaught daughter or son. Sometimes beautifully in the questions which come bubbling to the surface of a child's mind. Sometimes dismally through the invasion of death, when unprepared minds face the fact of the grave and, panic-stricken, try to read its meaning through tear-dimmed eyes.

Close the doors of your home, if you desire. Make it complete, self-sufficient. But those questions which Christ raised, those principles which he revealed will come in. "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst."

Or, consider the situation of business. Business is business, we may say. It is a competitive game, a battle of wits. Honesty, of course, is the best policy. It pays in the long run. It avoids the penalties of the law. But anything short of the referee's whistle goes. We shall hire a staff of lawyers to keep us off the sidelines of the law, but within those legal limits we shall "take all the traffic will bear." We will have none of these sentimental uplifters talking to us about the service motive. It's the profit motive which turns the wheels of business. We will have no preachers talking to us on Sunday about the rights of labor and the principles which should govern our business. What do parsons know about handling men and money? We pay them to preach the gospel and let business alone. And so we may carry on our business in an air-tight compartment, whither we think the atmosphere of religion can not penetrate. Then what happens?

Christ in Business

It was less than fifty years ago, in the expanding '80's when railroads and mercantile houses were beginning to spread their corporate fingers over our country that a well known old business buccaneer uttered his famous slogan, "The public be damned." It expressed the mood of the bumptious business enterprises of those days. But that slogan has been changed to "The public be pleased." Service is the motto in business today. Of course, we are not so gullible as to believe that business has been converted to thoroughgoing Christian practice, for very much of the so-called service is merely enlightened self-interest. But the increase of service clubs, the rising ethical codes of trade associations, the more humane conditions of work, are all evidences that the principles laid down by the penniless teacher of Palestine are making their way into the circles of business. "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst."

Or, consider the social circle. In our complex communities, both rural and urban, our social hours are crowded almost more than full. Into such surfeited society, religion has a difficult entrance. Whereas in older and simpler times religious services were rather exciting breaks in the monotony of the week, now they seem to be the monotonous breaks in the excitement of the week. The dim aisles of a church do not seem very alluring when we have the promenades of Palm Beach and the orchestrated dance floors of delightful hotels.

The religious ceremonies and exercises of the church seem very tame alongside the fascinating and exotic entertainments devised for our daily enjoyment. And the very momentum of amusement buoys us up, keeps us from sinking, depressing loneliness. Hence, weeks pass with no thought of spiritual concerns. Sundays come and go as days of pleasure in the country. I stopped to see an old room-mate of mine some months ago in Chicago. This young lawyer laughingly told me that he was quite regular in his church attendance. He said, "I have not missed an Easter Sunday in six years." For all intents and purposes, this successful young attorney had shut the door of his social circle against the admittance of religious obligations.

RALPH W. SOCKMAN

This kind of living can go on gaily as long as health, happiness and prosperity continue. But it does not go on indefinitely, even though it may last through an individual's life time. The social system gets fed up with the artificial and the sensual, just as one's bodily system becomes surfeited with cloying sweets or canned foods. After a time we crave the tonic and vitamins of simplicity and spirituality. That is why the Greek and Roman world turned with avidity from the extravagance and indulgence of epicurean pleasures to the ascetic purity and austerity of early Christianity. And for the same reason a generation of flapperism and libertinism is regularly followed by a reaction toward Puritanism. The principles of Christ crowded out of the social circle come back. "The stone which the builders rejected becomes the head of the corner."

Francis Thompson's confession is a poetic description of the inescapable Christ. Thompson, who, as a young medical student, paralleled in our day the searching experiences of Augustine, tried all sorts of stimulants and opiates to get the thrills of life, and then put into his "Hound of Heaven" the picture of the invisible Presence which pursued him:

> I fled him down the nights and down the days:
> I fled him down the arches of the years;
> I fled him down the labyrinthine ways
> Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
> I hid from him, and under running laughter.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
> But with unhurrying chase,
> And unperturbed pace,
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
> They beat—and a Voice beat
> More instant than the Feet—
> All things betray thee who betrayest me.

Move if you will across the sunny landscape of joyous youth and prosperous age or walk with the pleasure-loving throng under the arc lights of the gay White-Way—and there clings to you as your shadow to your body—a Presence—the presence of those forces and laws laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ. "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst."

The Inescapable Galilean

Consider now, a fourth situation—that of governments. Here certainly is a realm where Christian principles must not be confused with political theories. Governments are not persons and cannot act according to personal standards, we are told. A government is a superperson set up to look after the welfare of the human beings under its jurisdiction. And, in order to shepherd its own, does it not have to guard against other governments? In order to be humane toward its own citizens does it not have sometimes to be inhuman toward others? The taking of life, as among citizens within its borders, is punished as murder; but the taking of life by one government against another is called war, and adeptness at it merits the highest medals of honor. Bearing false witness by neighbors against neighbors is despicable; but among the chief instruments of war are false propaganda and spy systems. Those simple principles of action which we call right and wrong as among individual persons are not held to apply among governments.

So many a political philosopher has argued from Machiavelli down to Nietzsche, who called Christian ethics a slave morality and destined to undermine any land which practiced it. But Nietzsche died in a madhouse after seeing the principles which he advocated overwhelm his own nation in the bloodiest war of all time—a war from which true statesmen have emerged saying, "It is Christ or chaos."

One clear conviction which has been distilled from the seething cauldron of the world war is the utter folly of trying to develop law-abiding citizens within nations while we leave the governments themselves lawless. We have come to realize that this is a legal as well as a physical universe. There must be codes of law for international as well as interpersonal action, and into that code must go the principles of the Prince of Peace. "Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst."

This inevitable reappearance of the locked out Christ is to me personally about the most convincing evidence of his divinity. Is it not amazing beyond human explanation that the keys to every situation, public or private, domestic or foreign, should be carried by the carpenter of Nazareth. He is the inescapable Galilean.

Christ Does Not Force His Way In

But while Christ can come into every situation, though the doors be shut, he can not come into any single self, unless the door be open from within. It is an axiom of law in the United States that a man's house is his castle. Inside it, he is protected from unwarranted search or interference. It is an axiom of law in the Kingdom of God that a man's personality, not his house, is his castle. The divine presence does not force his way across the doorstep of any soul. "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul." The doors of the self, if they are to be opened, must be opened from within.

We know how true this is in dealing with one another. We are necessarily held back from doing certain things for people by the very nature of personality. We can provide the paraphernalia of education and lay them on the doorstep of a boy. But unless the lad opens his mind from inside that educative process will never penetrate to him. As it has been said, "You can lead a boy to college, but you cannot make him think." We can restrain a man from crime; we can not restrain him from sin, for sin is an affair of impulse and motive, elements which are hidden behind the door of the self. We can make a man pay his income tax, but we can not make him generous, for generosity and charity are attitudes of the heart and only the man himself can arrange those. We can make a man courteous and polite; we can not endow him with grace, for grace goes deeper than good manners and dwells in the secret places of the soul.

Thus the very laws of our beings limit us in our approaches to one another. And the Creator himself observes these same limiting laws. This truth is difficult for some to comprehend. Last summer I recall that more than one radio question was to this effect: "If God loves men, why does he allow them to destroy their souls and go to hell?" Our human analogies ought to suffice as an explanation. A father loves his son, but can he chain and muzzle that son in order to keep him from running away as he would a dog? No, the chain and muzzle would make a dog spirit in that son. If the son is to grow up into full manhood, he must have certain freedom of will and choice, and the very love of the father for his child causes him to give the boy his freedom. Likewise it is the very love of God which leaves us our freedom. The Divine Presence does not break in on any personality. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him."

What Can We Do About It?

And so this Divine Presence waits at our personal thresholds and tries to attract our attention. He makes himself felt to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. He touches our lives with many revealing experiences. He fills us with wistfulness and curiosity. His influences flow over us when we are meditating or dreaming. He haunts us in many a waking hour. He surprises us with gleams of beauty. He makes us restless with growing pains of the soul. He disturbs us with the joy of elevated thoughts. He imparts a subtle pressure to the mind, "a hunch" as Mr. Buchman and his followers would put it.

> There is a stranger at the door.
> He gently knocks, has knocked before.

And what can we do about it?

(a) We can do nothing, if we so choose. We can keep the door to our personality closed. We can say: "It is a mystery. There may be something real in it or there may not. But it is all so nebulous, so shadowy. And we are practical, matter-of-fact and not mystical." And so we leave the door bolted and go about our business like hard-headed men of common sense. Thus we neglect that uncommon sense, that spiritual insight which might have welcomed into our lives the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of the Risen Christ.

(b) Or we may take the attitude of *resignation* and say with a sort of sigh, "Yes, there is a Power not ourselves present in our situation. There is a divine will overshadowing us. We may as well be resigned to the inevitable." And so we open the door saying resignedly, "Thy will be done." These four words we usually associate with Gethsemanes and death beds. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Christ was facing the close-up stern reality of the cross, that he said, "Nevertheless not my will but thine be done." It was on a death bed that William McKinley, realizing the approaching end, uttered the same words. And to be sure, there are times when resignation to the inevitable is a mark of high heroism.

Christ No Gloomy Presence

But it is a woeful and doleful misreading of the New Testament to think that the Christ at the door of life is a gloomy Presence, an inescapable shadow to which we must be resigned. So many people make that mistake. The moment they begin talking about God or Christ their voices take on a sepulchral tone. To say, "Yes we must do it, it is God's will," is to many tantamount to saying that it is a mighty disagreeable duty. "Prepare to meet your God" used to exclaim the evangelist in shivering tones which made us think of awesome judgments and penalties. That, however, is not the way the New Testament pictures this Presence at the door of life. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This Christ is coming, not with a search warrant, but as a supper guest.

(c) The person who truly discerns the Christlike nature of the divinity at his door opens, and he opens with an air of expectant cooperation. Resignation says "It is God's will. It can't be helped." Expectancy exclaims "It is God's will. He can help." And help he does.

Observe the effect of that entrance as described by William James. At twenty-eight James wrote a letter, not published until years later, which revealed him in a state of wretched mental health, with no congenial task in view and with no satisfying philosophical convictions to answer his disturbing doubts. This personal experience of his young manhood gives peculiar point to the passage in the great philosopher's Edinburgh lectures which runs:

> There is a state of mind known to religious men, but to no others, in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and waterspouts of God. . . . The time for tension in our soul is over, and that of happy relaxation, for calm deep breathing, of an eternal present with no discordant future to be anxious about, has arrived.

That which the great psychologist described Abraham Lincoln demonstrated. In a remarkable speech given a short time before his assassination, Lincoln looking back over those four black years in the White house said: "I have not controlled events. I would rather say that events have controlled me. But I have met them all with this faith." And because he opened the door of his mind to what he believed was the will of God, because he kept fellowship with a divine comrade in those lonely pacing praying nights of the civil war, Lincoln preserved a poise unshaken by shattering reverses, a sympathy unbroken by the bludgeonings of others' hatred, a strength of spirit which made him the rallying center of a whole nation and the lasting miracle of American manhood.

There is a divine guest standing at the door of the soul. We can not keep him away, but we can keep him out. Let him stand there if we will, his patience is inexhaustible. But let him in, and his power is immeasurable, for he is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to a power that worketh in us."

Going Through with God

By William Pierson Merrill

He brought us out, that he might bring us in. Deuteronomy 6:23.

BUT of the early story of the Hebrew people stood one event, so dramatic, so significant, that they could never forget it. Again and again in the writings of historian, prophet, and psalmist, we come upon warnings, or exclamations of wonder and joy, based on the remembrance of the way in which God had "brought them out of the land of Egypt." The fact even finds its way into the preface to the ten commandments. The loyal Hebrew looked back to that crucial time as the loyal American looks back to the days John Fiske calls "The Critical Period of American History," the years in which the people of this land passed from being a loosely bound set of colonies into a coherent national existence.

That story of the passage from Egypt to the promised land has lingered on also as a favorite illustration of Christian progress. Some of us, who would not willingly submit to being called aged, recall vividly the zest with which certain hymns used to be sung by godly folk, which represented the state of unregeneracy as Egypt, life here as the passage through a "desert drear," death as the Jordan, and heaven as the promised land. "There is a land of pure delight"; with what fervor that hymn was sung in the old days! Such songs have largely disappeared from our hymnals; and those of them that remain are not often called for.

Yet the striking story of the exodus, and of the journey through the desert to the land of promise, has not lost its vividness or its meaning for present day living. There is that in this text which fits closely the problems of our day. Indeed, I doubt if there is in the whole Bible, from the first word of Genesis to the last word of Revelation, a text which applies more closely to the life of the immediate present than does this simple summary of the dealings of the Lord with his people of old, "He brought us out that he might bring us in." The first part is the statement of fact which is clear to everyone. The second part is a statement of purpose, which must be clear to us all if things are to come out right.

Look back a moment to the historical occasion which these words sum up. God had led his people out. There could be no doubt of that. There they were in the desert. Egypt was back of them; Palestine before them; the desert all around them. Amid the records of that time—scanty as they are, and not always clear—we can detect the existence of three parties or groups.

Three Groups

First of all, there is the group that wants to go back. They are afraid of this desert life. They long for the comfort and stability of the old order. "Criticize Egypt as you will, it does stand for a measure of certainty and security. This wandering life in the desert, with no fixed abode, no assured subsistence, no certain way or goal, is intolerable. All this man Moses has done is to bring us out. Come on! Let's go back. At least we know what we shall find there."

But a second group is even more veciferous. They love the desert life. "Now we are free!" they exultantly cry. Bedouin existence is a joy to them. Anarchy is pleasant. There is a chance now for the unlimited self-expression of the individual. He can do as he pleases, and roam as he will. "We are out of Egypt, thank God, or thank Moses, or thank the stars, or things in general. At any rate, here we are, and we propose to have a good time. Who wants a house when he can pitch his tent where he pleases? Who cares for an ordered social life when he can do as he will?"

But there is a third group. Sometimes it seems to be very small, made up of a few who can see deeper

and farther than the rest. But at times the mass of people catch a gleam of the vision which the leaders see more clearly. This group will not turn back. They have done with Egypt. Attractive or unattractive, good or bad, it lies behind them and it can never be home again. But neither will they settle down in the desert. They see the wilderness only as a necessary place to pass through. Because it must be traversed, they will tramp on through it with good cheer and unflagging courage. They will hold back, and wait, if necessary, rather than lose touch with the whole body; they will move slowly, if they must; but they will keep moving. Sometimes they will leave the camp, climb a hill and catch a vision of the land that is very far off. But never will they let die out from their hearts the assurance that ahead of them lies a land of promise; they know that God has "brought them out that he might bring them in"; and they mean to go on through with God.

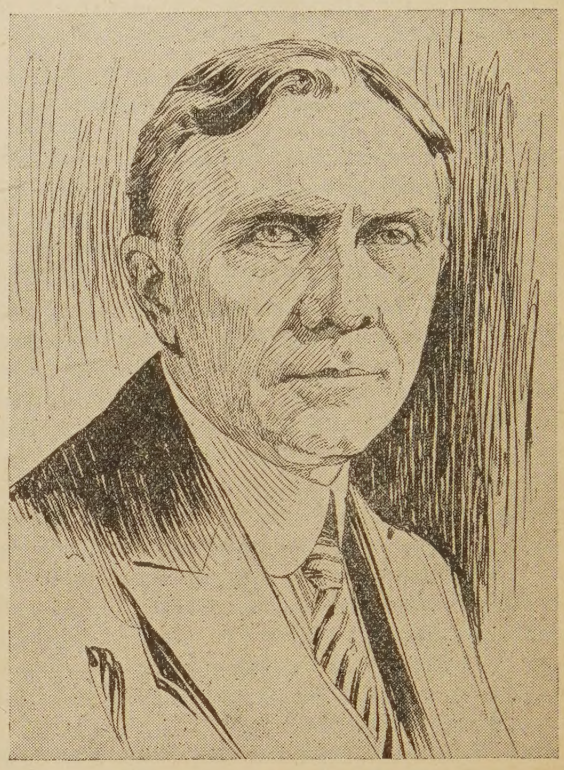
The most outstanding characteristic of this present age is that we have been brought *out* from an old order of things and thoughts. There has been an exodus from accepted ways and established standards that is startling in its range and thoroughness. If it were possible for anyone of us, who has kept reasonably alive and responsive to the life around him, to realize clearly what he thought and believed and held to be right and expedient, and accepted as assured truth twenty or thirty years ago, he would be startled and sobered at the contrast it would offer to his present thoughts and standards and ways. You may think you haven't changed. If you could just see yourself as you were back there you would echo the shocked cry of the little old woman in the song, "Can this be I?"

God Has Brought Us Out

God has brought us out. Is that all there is to the matter? Take it in the realm of our beliefs, our actual personal creeds. It is safe to say that anyone who has been reading and thinking, giving his mind fair play, has found himself led out from the well-assorted, closely-articulated beliefs of the past into a rather vague uncertainty. An enterprising writer recently sent a questionnaire to some five hundred ministers, asking about their beliefs. The results were startling. Aside from a few absolutely fundamental convictions, such as the existence of God, there was great variety as to what they did and did not believe. I am sure that the people gathered here this morning are above the average for firm and clear faith in the principles and doctrines of the Christian religion. Yet, if it were possible in some way to take an x-ray picture of the real mind and soul of each of you, and then to make a composite photograph of them all, I imagine it would be a vague and nebulous affair. People do not know just what they believe, as they did in past days. There is a widely diffused and deeply realized agnosticism. We have been led out from the Egypt of fixed traditions and creeds into a desert of uncertainty.

There is a strong group of sincere believers who dislike and fear the desert of doubt. They are trying to lead us all back to the old ways and the old creeds. There, and there alone, we shall be safe, they cry to us. Give up your tents, and go back to the narrow, solid, square, stone houses our fathers built so strongly in days gone by.

One Sunday afternoon a few weeks ago I preached on Protestantism, trying to show the glory and value of a free and advancing Christianity. During the week



William Pierson Merrill

that followed I received a most interesting letter from a man who withheld his name, but revealed his soul. He was keenly alive to the dangers of free thinking; he had found himself in the trackless desert of modern doubt and agnosticism. To quote his own statement, "A few years ago, just after my coming to this country at the close of the great war, in which I served in the British army, I was confronted by a mental alternative, religiously:—pessimistic nihilism or Roman Catholicism. Every thinker will soon be confronted with the same alternative. The only composed, steady, reasonable, balanced system I could find was Catholicism." So he went back to Egypt, or its theological equivalent, Rome.

His letter was courteous, thoughtful, acute, convinced. He could not stand the desert of uncertainty; so he had gone back to the place where certainty reigned, because there one believed and did as he was told. At least he had the courage of his convictions. Finding the desert impossible, and seeing no land of promise ahead, he did not stop in some half-way house, but went back to the realm of absolute authority.

At Home in the Desert

There is another group, however, which likes the desert and proposes to stay in it. One of the strange phenomena of our day is the number of people who are content with doubt in place of faith, who find ag-

nosticism a more or less comfortable atmosphere in which to live. They have left the old creeds behind, and have found no new ones to take their place. There is a vacuum where belief used to reside. And they seem quite content with the exchange. But nothing is surer in all the world than that such a state of soul cannot last or satisfy. It is as true of the spiritual world as it is of the physical world, that "nature abhors a vacuum." The faculty of believing, left unused, will atrophy, and bring on disease and death, as surely as will an unused lung, or an unworked muscle. To be content with the desert is to lose out.

When Emerson visited England, Arthur Hugh Clough said to him sadly, "Carlyle has led all of us younger men out into the desert and left us there." Emerson laid his hand on Clough's shoulder and said, "Perhaps you are the Joshua to lead them into the promised land." Clough never fulfilled that prophecy. He had his Pisgah-glimpses. But he never got out of the desert. Looking back now to that time when the new spirit of agnosticism came in like a flood, we can see that the situation was met best, not by the reactionaries who timidly tried to make their way back to the old places; nor by those content, in Matthew Arnold's striking phrase, to "wander between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born"; but by those who, like Browning and Tennyson and Brooks and Drummond, led on to the larger thoughts and surer truths that lay beyond the immediate horizon.

Agnosticism, doubt, uncertainty, is a desert through which most thinking men and women must pass, if they are to be honest and make progress and play fair with the God of truth. God is too good to us to let us settle down and say, "I know enough." He tempts us, challenges us, drives us out. When such a time comes, blessed is the one who will not turn back in fear, reacting to ancient ways and thoughts that have ceased to be real and vital; nor yet will be content to roam in the desert of doubt, living a Bedouin life of unbelief: who will say, "God brought me out that he might bring me in"; and will think and read and pray and hold on and push forward until at last there shines before him the promised land of a new and sure and vital faith, where he can be at home with the God who has led him out that he might lead him in.

We Are Forced to Move Out

Some of us who know by personal experience what it means to pass from faith to doubt; to see old certainties fade into mist; to wonder if there is anything we can believe; to doubt and question the very bases of life; and who have then, by the grace of the living God, found our way through that "great and terrible wilderness" of doubt, want to cry out to younger men and women, who have just lost their sense of ordered belief, and feel abandoned in a trackless waste, "Go on with God! Do not turn back! Do not settle down to live in the tents of doubt all your life. Come on through. Ahead of you lies a firmer faith, a richer assurance, a more unclouded belief, if you will only resolutely go on through, keeping true to the best you know. There is a promised land of clear assurance; and God has brought you out that he might bring you in."

It is not only in our religious beliefs that changes have come, and that uncertainty prevails. All along the line of our life we have been forced to move out. A brilliant and striking presentation of the present situation in the general tenor of our life is found in the opening part of Walter Lippmann's "A Preface to Morals." It is a convincing picture of a changing order, changing radically. The old sense that somewhere there is authority has gone for the masses of men. There is a stream of books and articles all pointing out the same startling and indubitable fact, that the life of our time has got away from its bases, cut loose from its moorings, and is sailing an uncharted sea, or wandering in a trackless desert. Standards have lost their force. They must prove their right to command, and they are hard pressed to do it. There is a widely diffused sense that our moral standards are simply the accumulations of custom. Why not take our own way, live our own life, form our own codes?

Men Will Not Turn Back

I am sorry for anyone who thinks that this is a mere passing phase, of no serious moment. It may be but a passing phase, but only if we are courageous to pass on through it to something better than the past has known. You may be very sure that it is no wave that will recede, leaving us where we were. It cannot be met and mastered by any revival of Puritanism, or any repressive or reactionary measures whatever. We must press on through, or die in the desert, for the mass of men will not turn back. The realization of the dreams of man and of the kingdom of God depends on how many will go on through with God, and how thoroughly and bravely they will press on through the desert to the promised land.

Always there are the three groups, the Egyptians, the Bedouin, the Israelites: those who turn back to the old order; those who are content amid the present disorder; those who move on to the new order. And always God is with those who move on; the future is theirs; the way of salvation leads ever forward. "Our God is marching on." We must keep step with him.

If you ask what we may take to guide us through the desert, the answer is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. In every time of change and advance, every period when men have been forced out of their accustomed ways and thoughts and started on pilgrimage to a new home, they have found new light on their way from a new reading and study of the Bible, and a fresh practice of prayer. You may protest that you have no clear convictions about the Bible, no sure faith in its authority. Very well; take it, read it, study it; above all, come to know for yourself the teachings of Jesus; and you will find a kindly light shining more and more as you come to know the Word of God better.

No nobler words were ever spoken than those which John Robinson addressed to the little band of Pilgrims as they were leaving Holland for the strange shores of this new world:

"I charge you before God and his blessed angels, to follow me no further than I have followed Christ; and if God should reveal anything to you by any other instrument of his, to be as ready to receive it as ever you were to receive any truth by my ministry; for I am confident the Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth out of his holy Word. I bewail the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go no further than the instruments of their reformation. The Lutherans cannot be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw; for whatever part of God's will has been imparted and revealed to Calvin they will rather die than embrace it. And the Calvinists, as you see, stick where Calvin left them. This is a misery much to be lamented; for though Luther and Calvin were precious shining lights in their times, yet God did not reveal his whole will to them; and were they living now they would be as ready and willing to embrace further light as that which they had received. I beseech you to remember your church covenant, at least that part of it whereby you promise and covenant with God and with one another, to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to you from the written Word of God."

There speaks a true man of God. He knew, as we should know, that God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, and that we are never more sure of his companionship than when we are moving on, even if through the dark, trusting him to bring us in, as he has brought us out.

Growth Means Change

We have been considering general conditions. But there is a message here that we need to take to heart, each in his individual life. For who is there of us that does not come to places where some power we cannot resist forces us out from our comfortable and loved homes, to wander about in new and uncertain places? We are ushered into strange, anxious experiences. Swift changes of fortune, failure or sudden success; ill-health; death striking into our circle; disrupting of ties; countless changes force radical readjustments of our way of living. We grow; and growth means change. Always we are moving out. And at the end, drawing nearer every day, is the great change that sends us out into an unknown country from which no traveler returns.

At every such time, blessed are they who cheerfully go on with God, expecting good to come, sure that he who has brought us out will bring us in. One yields all too easily to the temptation to look back, to cling to the thing that has been, to clutch at the receding past. There is no hope or happiness in that. "Let the dead past bury its dead." Nor yet is it the best way to rest content with the unsettled present, losing interest in what is to come, living spiritually from hand to mouth. The glorious thing is to move on in the spirit that cries:

The best is yet to be;
The last of life for which the first was made.
Our times are in His hand
Who said, "A whole I planned,
Youth sees but half; trust God;
See all; nor be afraid."

Are You Saved?

By Albert W. Palmer

Work out your own salvation. . . . For it is God who worketh in you.

IF I WERE to come up to anyone of you when you were not expecting such a question and the guards were down and suddenly ask, "Are you saved?" I would probably get some such answer as this: "Well, I don't pretend to any special piety but I hope the Lord won't be too hard on me. I guess I can take my chances with the rest!" If you belonged to a more traditionally minded congregation your answer might be different—something like this possibly: "Well, I can't say that I am. I have been to the Billy Sunday meetings and listened to Paul Rader and Gipsy Smith. I even hit the sawdust trail once and went forward to the mourners' bench, but it didn't 'take.' I try to do right and live on the square, but somehow I can't quite believe all the preachers say and so I've never joined the church. I could never make all this talk about 'the blood of the Lamb' seem real to me and so I've never been able to 'experience religion' and feel that I had been 'saved,' as you call it."

Two Ideas of Salvation

It is quite obvious that the word "salvation" means two very different things in different religious circles. To the fundamentalist type of mind it signifies a forensic deliverance from penalty, but to the modernist an achievement of truly noble character. With the fundamentalist the formula is very simple and marches forward with relentless logic. Here it is: All men are under condemnation of death because of Adam's sin and the resultant curse resting on the human race. This makes it impossible for man to do right. Therefore a man's own sins are added to the inherited account. To meet this dreadful situation the plan of salvation has been set up. Christ has come, combining the natures of God and man, and by his death has paid the debt and suffered the penalty due to man by Adam's sin. God, having received satisfaction, is now free to forgive man and does so in all cases where men accept this plan, believe a correct theology and try to pattern their lives on a Christian model. Those who for any reason can not or will not definitely and consciously accept this scheme of salvation are still under the original doom and go at death to everlasting torture regardless of the quality of their lives.

If this seems a belief too harsh or mechanical possibly to exist in our enlightened age, let me tell you that just last spring there wandered into the "Afterglow," which follows our evening service, a man who in the discussion of the sermon at that meeting said substantially this: "I have been at a Jewish cemetery this afternoon and, as I saw the women wailing for their dead, I said to myself, Well may they weep! Refusing God's plan of salvation, there is no hope for them!"

To the modern type of mind, however, salvation is not something that is done for you but something that happens within you. It is not the clearing of a court record but the transformation of a life attitude. The only salvation of enough value to be worth bothering about consists in the achievement of a truly noble character. It is something to be "worked out," not something to be granted from above—it is an inner achievement not an outward donation. There is no salvation

ALBERT W. PALMER

apart from character and, more than that, there is no genuine achievement of character that is not, so far as it goes, a very real salvation.

Salvation is, therefore, something progressive, never fully attained, always partial and incomplete but always pressing on like the mastery of an art or the pursuit of an education. There is no hard and fast line to be drawn between the "saved" and the "unsaved." What sincere and modest man wants to stand forth and, with colossal self-assurance, proclaim "I am saved!"? Would not any honest soul say rather: "I hope I am being saved. Some parts of my life are better than they used to be, but I am painfully conscious of many places which need improvement"?

But are there no lines to be drawn? Oh yes, but they are not between "saved" and "unsaved," so much as between those who are seeking a better life, conscious of shortcomings and humble because of them, and those who, with arrogant disregard of their better selves, feel no need of betterment and flout the nobler promptings of their souls. Put in modern terms, salvation is attained by a release of unused, and sometimes undreamed of, spiritual energies within the soul. There is a nobler personality within. Salvation is any process that will set it free!

How do we know there is a nobler personality within? Because great emergencies reveal it with startling vividness. Let an earthquake come, as it came to San Francisco, and for a brief period of peril and suffering human nature attains new heights of moral grandeur. People who have been bartenders, prostitutes, gamblers, thieves, and thugs do heroic and unselfish acts of pure devotion to human helplessness quite different from their sordid daily lives. Even purse-proud and snobbish social parasites do something useful!

The Better Self

You look down on the crew of a little steamer putting out to sea—half of them drunk, the marks of dissipation on their faces, not one of them "saved" or wanting to be saved. But tonight, when the little tub goes on the rocks and a crew is needed to take a line ashore, some of these blasphemous, obscene, hard-boiled, "lost" souls will tumble into the boat and risk their lives like heroes. A prosecuting attorney said to me the other day: "Murder is always unnatural. Every human being has something within him that responds to a cry of distress. No matter how enraged, a normal person cannot help but stay his hand at the shriek of suffering and fear. To do otherwise is to do violence to the deep instincts of his own soul."

Now all this links up with a very famous essay by William James on "The Unused Physical Energies of Man." We know that in times of great emergency people develop strength and power of achievement and endurance never before experienced in their whole lives. What if there be, in the world of spiritual realities, a seldom-tapped reservoir of nobler deeds and loyalties? This is also in line with the newest conception of evolution. The old Lamarckian idea was that the organism evolved by reaching out and laying hold on something new from the outer world. The newer conception of evolution looks on it more as a release of latent capacities within. The wild crabapple has within it the potentialities of a rich, juicy, edible apple; the halting violin player has within him the possibilities of a great musician. The problem is how to release these higher potentialities.

Donald Hankey, the "beloved captain" who left his theological studies at the call of war to enlist with a company of roughnecks from the London slums, marveled at what he called their "inarticulate religion." They violently repudiated all religion—by which they meant the theology, forms and ceremonies of the church—and at the same time displayed remarkable fortitude, brotherhood, good cheer and self-denial. It never occurred to them that these qualities had anything to do with "religion." I wonder if some Donald Hankey looking down from above would remark on our inarticulate religion?

How Release the Better Self?

Work out your own salvation then! It is our own! It is latent within us! But how are we to work it out —how release this better self?

The first way I would suggest is by obedience to

conscience. "Strive to keep alive in your heart that spark of the divine fire called conscience." Every man who still hears that still small voice is salvable. Don't blow out the light of conscience! Jesus' most solemn warning was against those who blasphemed the spirit of truth, even as Isaiah cried, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter."

But conscience alone may be bigoted and intolerant. The witch burners kindled their fagots at the pure flame of conscience, and the horrors of the Inquisition were probably enacted by conscientious men. Conscientiousness alone is no guarantee of wisdom. To conscience one must add, therefore, the unfaltering quest for truth. Beyond all prejudice and propaganda, beyond the traditions I have received, beyond even my own desires, I must continually ask: What is objectively and impartially true? What are the facts? What is a balanced, fair, far-sighted, unimpassioned, judgment in view of all the facts?

Are We Progressing?

I was talking once with Count Soyeshima, a Japanese scholar and statesman, a Confucianist and yet a modern thinker. He said rather pessimistically that he could not see that we were any further along than the ancients—that is in essential ideas apart from mere material gains. I think I made some impression on him when I suggested that the modern reverence for the scientific spirit might represent a real gain in our age—the idea that truth is to be sought and followed objectively and dispassionately beyond all prejudice and propaganda. And long before the scientific spirit had come to consciousness, did not Jesus say, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"?

But truth alone is only one side of life. There is a third side to the crystal of character and that is love. Conscience can't lead you wrong if it is balanced by an impartial loyalty to truth on one side and devotion to love on the other. I had some friends who lived their useful lives in the light of one supreme formula. Before every decision they asked the question: "What would be the loving thing to do?" And if that sounds too sentimental, why not use the stern and measured words of Jesus, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them"? The Good Shepherd, the Good Samaritan, the Compassionate Father—all these parables of Jesus put love at the helm of life.

Do right, seek truth, follow love—what else? Perhaps all these need to be suffused with something more heroic—the willingness to work and, if need be, to suffer for that which conscience approves, truth verifies and love demands. David Starr Jordan's famous formula, "Wisdom is knowing what to do next; virtue is doing it!" applies here. There is no salvation without the deed! Consecration is ever the upward path of the soul.

This, then, is the way of salvation so far as I can point it out to you. You see I am like Leonard Bacon's four-year-old daughter who met at the door a grave and dignified caller, no less than President Porter of Yale, with this astonishing message: "No, Dr. Bacon isn't home, but if you are a poor, miserable sinner seeking salvation, I'll see what I can do for you!"

What Did Jesus Require?

But, someone says, you haven't said anything about Jesus and the Cross. No, I have with great difficulty and self-restraint, tried not to. I have wanted to put salvation in new and unfamiliar terms. I have tried to deal not with conventional religious phraseology but with the realities of life. For I believe that it is just these realities that Jesus is interested in. He himself said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." And to make this doubly clear, the parable of the last judgment represents the final issues of life as resting not upon theology or ritual observance but upon the realities of conduct. Ultimately you can't escape Jesus and his cross if you live for the things that conscience approves, truth verifies and love demands. Like those in the parable who were surprised to find that conduct led them to Christ, you'll find him at some judgment day of life, here or hereafter, this year or next.

But, someone says, you haven't said anything about "the grace of God" and we have always understood that we were saved by grace. And so we are! But my sermon isn't finished yet, nor my text exhausted—however exhausted the congregation may feel! You see the text goes on "for it is God that worketh in you." Well, every humble and spiritual soul ultimately comes to that. I remember a quaint, unspoiled old Portuguese gardener in Honolulu who used to prune my grape-arbor. "Manuel," I would say, "now you promise me a good grape crop." And he would reply: "I prune 'em good, but I no promise, Mr. Palmer. You know, God gives the grapes!"

And, as we go on through life, we come more and more to feel a mysterious Presence stirring within us which we cannot altogether predict or control. Outer events may awaken us, as they did Isaiah in the long ago. You remember how his great vision begins: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord." Death or a sunset, a new book or an old friend, may be the key in the lock, but God was there beyond the door all the time, and we come to feel that, after all,

> There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

The more loyal you are to Conscience and Truth and Love, the more faithfully you try to work out your own salvation in harmony with these earthly counselors, the more certain you are to come to the experience of the great poet:

> He seems to hear a heavenly Friend
> And, through thick veils, to apprehend
> A labor working to an end,

until at last you confess with the mystic that there was something deeper at work within your toils and struggles and know that it is God who worketh in you.

It's a seldom sung but beautifully mystical hymn that says:

I sought the Lord—and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking me.
It was not I that found, O Savior true—
No, I was found by Thee.

The Theologian Interviews Jesus

By Richard Roberts

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3.

NICODEMUS was an important person. He was a sort of professional theologian. He sat on a board which was expected to maintain sound doctrine and to punish heresy. Like the rest of his colleagues, he was a man for whom the whole universe was completely charted. The old map-makers had to leave some parts of their maps blank—they wrote down *terra incognita,* unknown land. But there was no unknown land in Nicodemus' religious geography. His mental sky was all mapped and settled; he was familiar with all its stars: and he fondly believed that he knew all the stars that were.

I

But one day a new star swam into his sky. Now Nicodemus, for all his orthodoxy, was not the man to turn a blind eye to the newcomer. He admitted it was there and that it was a real star. But the star wasn't mentioned in his books, and he was very much bothered about it. Some of his colleagues did not take that view of the matter. They said that the star had no credentials; it had come unbidden and unauthorized. It could not be recognized as a star; and if it persisted in shining, it must be put out. On no account must it be allowed to put the orthodox astronomy out of joint. But Nicodemus had a few colleagues who agreed with him; the proper thing, they said, was to go and examine this new luminary at close quarters. And they were wise. You do not do away with a fact by pretending that it isn't a fact. You may not like the fact; but you do well to come to terms with it. For a fact is a stubborn thing: and if you shut your eyes to it, it may trip you up and break your neck. And Nicodemus and his friends were wise in going to see this disquieting portent for themselves—this astonishing person who had set them all by the ears and whom their orthodoxy did not allow for.

But Nicodemus was handicapped from the start. He was quite sure that Jesus would fit into his system when he had discovered all the facts about him. Indeed, he knew just where he would fit in. He was ready with his pigeon-hole. "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God." If you have been disposed to think of Nicodemus as a hidebound conservative, you have made a mistake. For a member of the official theological board, he was making some very handsome concessions; and I suspect that if some of his more conservative colleagues had heard him, they would have shaken their heads and said that that man Nicodemus was going over to the modernists. Here was a person from Galilee, and from Nazareth to boot, that disreputable place, a man of no education, who had never been to the rabbinical schools, had never been admitted into the profession, a wandering preacher without credentials of any kind, and Nicodemus had the grace and liberality to call him a teacher sent from God. That is, as we should say, "one up" for Nicodemus.

Now it is a good thing to be liberal-minded. In normal times liberalism is the proper frame of mind, for it is simply being intelligent. But there are occasions when it is not enough; when you want something more radical than a tolerant spirit. And this was one of those occasions. That was what Jesus meant when he cut Nicodemus short and told him he must be born again. Nicodemus, he seems to say, there is something new here, something more than meets the eye; the like of which you haven't met before. It doesn't fit into any of your ready-made categories. You are right as far as you go; but beyond the point at which you stop, there is something which you must have a new eye to see, a new sense to feel, a new mind to grasp. In a word, Nicodemus, you are in the presence of something of which you cannot make sense unless you are born again. And that, as we know, was something of which Nicodemus could make neither head nor tail.

II

I suspect that Jesus would have a busy time with people like Nicodemus, if he came back to the world today. For I imagine that there has not been for a long time such industry in explaining him. The number of lives of Jesus that are being offered to us is very astonishing, and it is full of suggestion to a reflective mind. The other day I was in a company in which the talk fell upon the biography of a great man which was not yet completed. The remark was made, "It will have to be published soon, or there will be no market for it." Yet that man has not been dead a generation, and he was one of the greatest men this country has brought forth. But here is this Galilean preacher, dead these nineteen hundred years; and he still troubles men; and these not men whom preachers of any kind usually trouble. And they have to make something of him; and then they put it on paper, and the most astonishing thing is that there is a market for what they write. These books even become "best sellers." The world evidently wants, even at this late date, to hear anyone who has anything fresh to say about Jesus of Nazareth. The Papinis, the Ludwigs, the Bruce Bartons, the Middleton Murrys, captured the ear of mankind when they wrote books about Jesus. . . . But I wonder what Jesus himself would say of them? And yet I don't wonder. I think I know.

Here comes Signor Papini. He has a book in his hand. And he says, "Rabbi, I have written this book

about you. I am enthralled by you. After a period of unbelief, I became a zealous Catholic, and of course I am quite orthodox in my view of your Person. You are a great hero to me, and in this book I have tried to put you in your proper setting."

And the Lord would say: "I am obliged to you, Signor Papini. But I don't quite recognize myself in the atmosphere of Italian grand opera. That eloquence, that magnificence rather disturbs me. No, signor, you have missed me, and before you can find me you must be born again."

And then comes Mr. Bruce Barton. He also has a book in his hand. "Rabbi, he says, "you are the man nobody knows—but me, and I have written a book about you. What a figure you would have cut in this twentieth century! What a magnificent executive you would have made! What a superb publicity expert! You have all the big ideas; you know how to handle men—in a word, you would have been at the top of the ladder."

And the Lord would reply to him: "You mean well, Mr. Barton, but I don't quite identify myself in your picture. You think that I might have been at the top of the ladder in your world; the only top I know anything about is the top of a Cross. If I did succeed it was just because I failed. And in your world, I would fail again in the same way. But you very up-to-date people don't understand that. My boy, you must be born anew, and then you can try again. And next time I don't think you will show me up as the Big Man."

And now Mr. Middleton Murry comes along. He also has a book in his hand. "Rabbi," he says, "I can see that you are a man of genius. You didn't let conventions and orthodoxies hold you down. You had wings and rose above them. And so you broke out in all sorts of wonderful ways; you said many undying things. You were no ordinary man: you had genius; your place is with Shakespeare and Keats, and you are the greatest of them."

And the Lord would say to him: "Mr. Middleton Murry, it is news to me that I am a man of genius; I don't seem to recognize myself in that character. I don't find the mantle that you have put on me very comfortable. But if I rightly understand you, I think that possibly you are on the right trail, perhaps not far from the kingdom of God. But you seem to me to be rather too cocksure, and therefore rather too narrow to see the whole truth. You too, Mr. Murry, must be born again."

III

"Ye must be born again." Let us clear our minds about that great saying. It has somehow gone awry in our thinking. We have translated it into a portentous Latin word, "regeneration," and have given it a narrow technical meaning. Man is corrupt by nature, and he must be regenerated before he can become a child of God; and some people have narrowed it still further by saying that you can be regenerated only by the waters of baptism. Now, it is safe to say that there was nothing of all that in the mind of Jesus here.

Now please observe that this new birth is represented not as turning a bad man into a good man, but turning a blind man into a man who can see. Except a man be born again, he cannot see . . .

Well, what can't he see? Now, you know that you can never see anything right except in its context; without its context, you see it wrong. Indeed, you are in a sense not seeing it at all. You are seeing something else. Sometimes a man is reported to have said a foolish or a false or an unpleasant thing. He indignantly denies it. He says that what he said has been torn from its context, and he gives it in its context—what he said before it and what he said after it—and there it does seem quite a different thing.

Richard Roberts

The trouble with Nicodemus was that he was looking at Jesus in the wrong context—in the context of Jewish history and Jewish orthodoxy, and so he saw him wrong. And the trouble with most of our estimates of Jesus is that we look at him in the wrong context. Signor Papini sees him in a curiously mixed context of Catholic orthodoxy and Italian romanticism; Mr. Bruce Barton sees him in the context of the conventional American valuation of life; Mr. Middleton Murry sees him in the context of literary criticism; and they all see him wrong. They put him in the wrong setting, and they distort him or miss him altogether.

But what then is the right setting? What is the true context of Jesus? Well, that is what he tells us. It is the kingdom of God. . . . And what is the kingdom of God? Well, don't ask me! I can't tell you. I can tell you what it isn't. It isn't orthodoxy, and it isn't organized religion either. It isn't the world of literature or the world of science or the world of philosophy or the world of business, though all these may

be included in it. It is a world that stretches out beyond the farthest frontiers of our little human worlds, those little territories of knowledge and thought and experience with which we are familiar; it is a world not within reach of your five senses or of your reason or of your imagination . . . and yet it is here and now, as real as yourself. Only you don't see it. . . .

Do you suppose that the world you see is all the world there is? Do you suppose that the past holds all the wisdom that man can ever learn? Have we come to the end of all experience? Men and women, don't you believe it! This little world is only the threshold of reality. This little life of coming and going, eating and drinking, buying and selling, playing and talking, is the merest little island in the ocean of eternity. So far from being at the end of all experience, we are hardly past the beginning of it. We are still wading in the shallows of knowledge; we are still apprentices in thought. We shall never know the world we live in, nor ourselves, nor understand anything that happens to us, so long as we only see them in the light of time. On the plane of nature, in the exercise of natural faculty, we move about in a twilight. And the Papinis and the Bartons and the Murrys see only a hazy, distorted picture of Jesus, just because they see him in this twilight of time, and neither they nor we shall know him until we see him in the light of eternity. The context of Jesus is the invisible world of eternity, the kingdom of God.

IV

But how does a man see that context? By himself getting into it. And how does a man get into it? By being born again.

Please don't suppose that there is any mystery in that. It is quite simple. To be born is to begin to live; to be born again is to begin to live a second time. It is precisely what Jesus says in the other gospels. "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." You must, that is, start out from the beginning, but this time in another direction.

You see, Nicodemus had been traveling by the road of orthodoxy, and logic and evidence—the road of Natural Faculty, if you care to call it so. And a perfectly good road it is for certain purposes and as far as it goes. But it never carries you far from the ground; you are always within the four walls of time and space. And Jesus says to Nicodemus, "You have come as far as you can on that road. When you say that I am a teacher come from God, you have said what is perfectly true; and that is as far as that road will take you. If you want to know the rest of the truth, you must travel by another road, the road of Spiritual Insight. You haven't much of that; and you will have to start just like a little baby, at the very beginning of the road, groping, stumbling, finding your way. And then after a while you will really begin to know what I am."

But how does a man acquire that insight? Well, how did living things acquire sight, anyhow? Here is the blind living organism, and from without, light was beating on it and troubling it. It didn't know what was troubling it, but it wanted to know and it tried to and kept on trying to. And out of that effort to lay hold of light grew the eye.

And so does the spiritual eye grow—by trying to see in the dark. What is dark to us today is full of light, and we see that light only by looking for it and looking for it. And that is precisely what you do when you pray. The light of eternity is falling on you and troubling you; and, like the blind organism, you go out to meet it, trying to apprehend it. That is what you do when you pray. And every time you pray, pray truly, something is added to your spiritual insight, and so little by little, until presently it is strong and clear enough to show you that wonderland that Jesus called the kingdom of God.

Beyond any doubt or question, the most important thing in life is to acquire this spiritual insight. A man is something less than half a man and sees much less than half the meaning of life, of the world, of himself, until he has some measure of it. Without it, he is a caged bird, a tethered beast, a prisoner of the twilight. . . . And it only comes by prayer. When you pray, you may be saying something, but what you are doing is much greater than what you are saying; you are knocking at the gate of eternity. When you worship you may be giving thanks, but you are also lifting your soul above time and place. When you meditate, you may be seeking peace and strength; but, even more, you are taking the path which the falcon's eye hath not seen. And if you pray and worship and meditate long enough, one day the heavens will open and let you through. And you will see something. And you will say, "Whereas I was once blind, I now see."

There is nothing more that I can say. The rest is with you. Don't you think you might begin to see about it tonight?

Automatic Justice

By Willard B. Thorp

He that doeth wrong shall receive again the wrong that he hath done. Col. 3:25. R. V. margin.

AN EXAMINATION of the Greek indicates that this translation is warranted by the literal meaning of the words. It certainly is much more interesting than the version in the text, "He that hath done wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he hath done." The one is platitude, the other arrests and holds our attention.

The wrongdoer shall get back what he did. It is not merely that he shall be punished for it—the thing itself shall come back upon him like a boomerang. What he gives he will get. It has the axiomatic form of an equation of identity. If you do x, you will get x. Action and reaction are equal and of the same kind. It really looks as if we had in this text a strand of the central truth of things. No judicial sentence is

involved, no trial by judge or jury; there is no room for appeal to clemency. We simply bring things upon ourselves. We reap the very thing that we have sown. The formula is so automatic that it seems as if there were no way of disputing it or getting away from it. It has the satisfying quality of a mathematical demonstration.

But before dependence can be placed upon a formula we must take it out into life and see if the facts conform to it. Let us apply that test to this formula in various familiar matters.

I

The Social Reaction

The man who lies and deceives and imposes upon others, what is he going to get from others? and how long is it going to take for him to get it? Not very long. The chickens come home to roost. In fact, he anticipates their coming. He dares not place dependence on what any man tells him. It is not simply that the man to whom he lied this morning will lie to him this afternoon—he will be fortunate if he gets off so easily as that from him. But he will instinctively feel that he has no right to place dependence upon anybody. He has left the world of implicit trust and entered the world of implicit distrust. This is so obvious that even habitual liars do not venture to lie all the time. They use falsehood only in emergencies. And they use it only on their victims; they do not double-cross their pals. If they did, they would soon have no pals. And as it is they have to keep moving from town to town and from job to job. They soon get to be too well known, and decamp to fresh fields and pastures new. The principle of the text is so inescapable that even the worst of men are obliged to reckon with it. The liar gets lied to, the deceiver gets deceived—that is his reward.

And of course one can say the same thing of the thief and the adulterer. I bracket the two, because they both take what belongs to somebody else. I do not know much about the so-called "new morality," but I am pretty sure it will not be able to get away from that. He who goes about taking what belongs to somebody else cannot complain if others take what belongs to him. The only way to escape it is to have nothing belonging to him, nothing they can get their hands on. And that is his usual condition. As soon as he acquires a home, a family, a bank account, he is exposed to the depredations of others. Not only that, but he is now responsible. Suits can be brought against him. His own interest now lies in upholding the law, not in breaking it down.

I have spoken of adultery, which is a very specific violation of the rights of others and in all parts of the world is recognized as a highly dangerous form of activity. But how is it in the larger field of loose relations between the sexes? Does the principle of the text hold there? It is the one thing that most certainly does hold. What a man does he gets back. If he is loose, he will find those with whom he has to do will be loose also. If they are free with him, they will probably be free with others. He has to reckon with that aspect of it. The girl who gives herself to him will give herself next week to somebody else, and she in turn cannot claim any man's faithfulness. If one likes that sort of thing, then that is the sort of thing one likes. But the world is mostly composed of people who want to settle down and have a home and a family; and it will always be true that those who would do that must pay the price, which is fidelity.

And so one might go through the list of crimes and sins and vices, and find this principle controlling everywhere. Sometimes it comes out in the tragic downfall of a man whose one grave fault has wrecked his life, as in Benedict Arnold, Charles Stewart Parnell, Oscar Wilde. It looks just now as if the very name of Pantages would be rendered utterly unavailable for a theater. But even when it does not come out in such dreadful ways, the tragedy is there, the nightmare of apprehension, the sword of Damocles hanging over one's head.

II

The Personal Deposit

But the social reaction is not all. Every false or cruel thing one does to another leaves a deposit in his own nature. Only part of its force is spent on the other; another and a very large part is stored up in his own soul. Even if he could escape the social reactions he is powerless in the grip of this law. Every false word makes him a falser man; every cruel act makes him a more cruel man; every autocratic act makes him a more tyrannous man. Not only is he eyed with resentment by others; his own nature becomes more truculent and overbearing. The process works very rapidly, accruing like compound interest.

This is the nemesis of all forms of wrongdoing. In fact, it is something that takes place even when no other persons are directly involved. The things one does in solitude leave their impress. Even if there be no actions, the man's thoughts come back upon him. A person may lie in a steamer-chair for a week and do nothing, and all the time his soul may be in process of degradation, his mental life moving in smaller and smaller circles approximating the animal or even the vegetable. It is a form of progressive degeneration. The person whose thoughts all revolve around himself and his own little concerns gets narrower and more petty until he becomes a psychopathic case. The creation of outside interests and larger relationships is absolutely necessary. This is a trouble which in a measure we all experience. Much of the time our thoughts just go round and round and get nowhere. We all know the man with a hobby. He has just one or two strings to his bow. He will sit through a lecture and only wake up when something is said that touches one of his pet notions. If we could look into his brain we should find that all his mental energy had been short-circuited and was revolving in a little eddy which long ago became an obsession. As we advance in years we all have to make a constant struggle to get out of these circular ruts which are the result of the things we have done and said and thought coming back upon us and involving us in squirrel-cage complexes.

III

Doing and Receiving Good

And now having gone thus far, let us turn the text over and look at a pleasanter side of it. If a principle is really universal it can be turned over and found equally valid. Very well, here goes! He that doeth good shall receive again the good that he hath done. Is not that the very central secret of an unfolding and enlarging life?

"Doing good" must of course be understood as

WILLARD B. THORP

meaning very much more than deeds of kindness, which is the direction that phrase has been drifting. To pass out a quarter to a beggar, or subscribe for a magazine one does not want, may or may not be doing good; in most cases it is not. Doing good is doing things that are constructive and that make for life and development.

There is a great law by which the good a man does gravitates back to him. Sometimes it goes a long circuit, bread cast upon the waters to return after many days. Sometimes a man who has done good and good only comes under a cloud of adversity or persecution; but the law is still working. England has had no nobler servant in this generation than Lord Haldane. He it was who, during a brief service as secretary for war, reorganized the entire British army, putting it on a footing that made the expeditionary force of 1914 ready for instant mobilization. When the war broke out, the Harmsworth press started a campaign of innuendo and suspicion to the effect that in the very center of the cabinet was a pro-German. The baseless rumor assumed such proportions that Haldane was driven out of office, a serious loss to the nation and a cruel injustice to a great and good man. When the victory had been achieved and the great Armistice day celebration was being held, all his old friends and former associates were in the procession and at the banquet, but Lord Haldane sat alone in his house with his books and his thoughts. Late in the night the doorbell rang, and an officer who would give no name was admitted to his study. It was none other than Field-Marshal Haig, who called to present him with a bound volume of his military dispatches, inscribed: "To Viscount Haldane, the greatest secretary of state for war that England ever had." The unseen law had not failed to work, by which the things that a man does come back to him.

There is no better example than in the work of a teacher. His is the most difficult of all arts, the stimulation and guidance and discipline of other minds. It is a task that must always be personal and can never be mechanized or standardized. Does that which he achieves return upon him? Indeed it does. It returns in appreciation; but still more it returns in the power to teach, to divine the working of other minds, their difficulties and stumbling-blocks; to know when to show a thing to the pupil and when to give him the joy of discovering it for himself. The one great teacher I have been under had that power to an extraordinary degree. Each class was to him a new and different problem. He would start over again to climb the hill of knowledge with them—leading them into perplexities, waiting while they groped for the clue to the way out, watching the light in their faces when at last one and another would cry "Eureka!" He traveled the whole way with them, and it meant more to him every time he went over it. Many a time he would go out into the waste after some lost sheep, some eagerly inquiring soul that had missed the path, take him back to the very point where he had wandered and set his feet again on the right trail. Do you wonder that they loved him? Do you wonder that at every commencement season returning students would point to him with moist eyes as the man who gave them for the first time the feeling of what it was to find the truth and to *know* that one had found it. Could any money pay Garman of Amherst for what he did for those students? The good that he did returned upon him many-fold; and when he died his old pupils, professors in colleges all over the land, put together specimens of their own productive thinking and printed them in a volume in memory of the man who taught them to be philosophers. He said he would rather write on living men's minds than on dead sheep's skins, and his monument was a living monument, the lives of his pupils.

So too will it be with that great teacher and great man who lies yonder on the Stamford campus awaiting the final summons—the man who when he came to this coast moved the center of American scholarship in zoology from Indiana in the direction of California, so many eager young students followed where he led. Persecution too he has known, and how it feels to stand alone amid a jeering mob and to be ostracised by one's peers. He has seen it all pass, and give place to a great reverence. No man can measure the ramifica-

tions of influence, nation wide, world wide, all good and wholesome, that have emanated from David Starr Jordan. The good that he has done has returned upon him indeed.

And then we think of that greatest of all teachers and life-givers, who set up in those few brief years in Galilee a light to which Tolstoy in Russia, Gandhi in India, Kagawa in Japan, and countless others have turned in our own far distant day for the inspiration of their lives. The most fruitful life that was ever lived on this earth was that of one who had no children, wrote no books, owned no property, held no office, and died on a cross. *He that doeth good shall receive again the good that he hath done.* Did he receive it, he whose body was rent asunder on Calvary? Did he receive it? . . . I will build my faith in immortality on the certainty that he has indeed received it. If it were not so, the very stones of Golgotha would cry out against the universe. No doubt he has been crucified again and again—for that was the thing for which he came. But as often as he has been crucified, so often he has risen from the dead, and has seen of the travail of his soul and been satisfied.

Thinking It Through

By Herman F. Reissig

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Ecclesiastes 12:13.

THE man who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes had a mind which likes to think things through to their conclusion. He is not content with scattered, unrelated facts and opinions. He joins fragments together and fits them into a final conclusion. The text is next to the last sentence he writes. It is the end of the book. This is what he says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; to fear God and keep his commandments, this is the whole duty of man." Our interest this morning is not so much in the value of the particular conclusion to which the writer comes. The interesting fact is that he does think things through. He sees the end. He has his eye on the place where matters are finally coming out. Let us hear the *conclusion* of the whole matter.

The End of the Road

All noble characters have guided their lives by great, distant conclusions. While lesser people are governed by the fact, the opinion, or the whim of the moment, the men of noble stature have had their eyes on the end of the road. They have solved the problem of the moment by reference to what they could see at the end.

Now the difficulty about reaching conclusions is that it takes time and thought and mental energy. But we modern people are as a rule too busy to bother much about the final aspect of things. We have all we can do to keep one jump ahead of today's demands. Thinking things through is one of the luxuries which our simple, slow-moving ancestors could afford to enjoy. As for us, question follows question in such quick succession that we are always tempted to act upon our first impulse, and then pass on to something else.

We are much like a motorist who finds himself in a bad traffic jam. When he started out he had a definite destination in mind. But the traffic becomes so muddled that he says to himself: "Right now, I don't care much whether I am going in the right direction or not. I haven't time to think about it. I have all I can do to keep from being bumped by the car in the rear, or backed into by the car in front, or sideswiped by the car alongside, or getting a summons for making a wrong turn. Once I get out of this jam, I'll get my bearings again and proceed in the right direction." But we modern people never seem to get out of the jam! Most of us are never quite able to maneuver ourselves onto a quiet side street where we can pull up and look at the map.

Living in Fragments

As a result we live in fragments. Each day is crowded with decisions, experiences, sensations, but there is little continuity in our lives. There is almost no fitting together of the disconnected pieces of life in an ordered plan. Perhaps some of us have had little experience with traffic jam and a different kind of illustration will help to make the matter clear. Last week I saw a girl walk into a store. Just as she crossed the threshold her string of beads broke and the beads went rolling, each for its own hiding place. One felt sorry for the girl, because nothing in the line of jewelry is much more unsatisfactory than a broken string of beads. But for the same reason one feels sorry for many people today. It is so difficult for them to get their thoughts, their facts and experiences picked up and strung together on a firm and unified life purpose. The pieces are all there but they have lost the string—if they ever had one.

Is that a picture of your life? Just one thing after another in a kind of bewildering succession with no satisfactory attempt to achieve an orderly and intelligible plan of life? One suspects that the picture partly fits most of us. We are on our way, there is no doubt about that. But where are we going?

My plea this morning is for the thought-through life. I am sure that it is a very unsatisfactory—and dangerous—business not to see toward what conclusion all these disjointed, fragmentary experiences are tending. A brush pile is good only for burning. It will bear no fruit and give no shade. What is the matter with a brush pile? The parts of the tree are all there. Yes, but no branch is related to any other branch. The branches are just thrown down and there is no unity in them. A life, as Dr. Wieman suggests, ought not to be a brush pile, but a growing tree in which every part is related to every other part by some vital principle.

Let us select a few characteristic spheres of our pres-

ent day life and say with the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter."

Think Religion Through!

To what conclusion are we tending in our religious life? Let us try to see what the present situation is. Religion has fallen on difficult days. The environment in which we live is not friendly to the religious life. For one thing, the heart of religion is personal fellowship with God. That means prayer, quiet thought, acquaintance with the religious experience of the race. It means a knowledge of the Bible because in the Bible is enshrined the most helpful and inspiring story of the religious experience of mankind. It means worship because in worship we dig through our superficial selves and face life at its roots, see ourselves as in our deepest heart we really are, tap the resources of life.

But science and invention have invaded our life and made privacy, quiet, and serenity very hard to achieve. The machine has so crowded and speeded up our daily life that quiet, fine things like prayer are easily crowded out. We move so swiftly that we find it hard to slow down for worship. Machines have made our environment huge, sensational, stunning. And this tremendous thing, which we call the machine age, has got us all in its grip. It is in our blood. Terrific speed, tremendous size, deafening clamor are the inescapable accompaniment of the modern man's life. Is it any wonder that religion, being at its heart an inner fellowship

A Pastoral Prayer

By Hugh Elmer Brown, *First Congregational Church, Evanston, Illinois*

INFINITE Father of our spirits, we the children of Thy love, toiling here for a brief season in the fields of time, pause from our labor and lift our longing eyes to Thee. Thou art our life and light, our hope and redemption. We cannot lay hold of Thee by our senses, but our souls go out in a great search after Thee. In Thee our joy is made full, our wills are made strong, our minds are made clear and our souls are made clean. We have moved hither and thither in restless search for sunshine and satisfaction; we return unto Thee who art our only source of joy and completion. We have tried the world and found it a great emptiness; we come back to Thee who are eager to fill our souls with everlasting truth and mercy.

We come with a song in our hearts, for the list of Thy benefits is beyond our counting. We thank Thee for the silent and beautiful kingdom of the past; its luminous hours of communion with Thee; its memories which tint all our existence; its brave and lovely lives linked with our own; its parents, teachers and friends, who under Thee gave our souls a start. We thank Thee for the stirring, stimulating days of the present, with their complexity and challenge; their unrivaled opportunities for self-improvement, and sacrificial service; their marvelous revealings of discovery and invention; their increased concern for the poor and ignorant. We thank Thee for the mysterious, inviting days which are to come, laden with secret stores for our replenishing, hidden delights for our enjoying, and dark experiences for our training. We thank Thee for things to mend, a disordered society to set to rights, broken lives to reconstruct, dirty cities to be cleansed, a hurrying people to turn toward the City of God. We thank Thee for the chivalry found in common life; for the silent heroisms of the home; for the hallowed drudgeries of hospital and sick-chamber.

We thank Thee for the Christianity which is outside the church and for the latent goodness which is in every bad man. We thank Thee that, despite the cleverness of wicked men and the foolishness of good men, thy kingdom makes steady advance. Thy bounty unto us is without boundaries.

And yet we baffle Thy plans, thwart Thy love and wander wretchedly from the way of Jesus. Stumbling, blundering children, we run away from Thee in our little rebellions, we play truant to our noblest professions. We return unto Thee, this morning, to have our stains removed, our petty shams stripped away, and our hearts fortified like Gibraltar against those subtle and invasive forms of selfishness which so often take us captive. May we enter into an unspeakable, unbreakable intimacy with Thee which shall save us in every hour of swift temptation. Give us a fine scorn for all meanness, a conscience of sensitive accuracy, and a rugged honesty in all things. Make us divinely discontented with our present moral attainments and cause us to crave continually sweeter, stronger lives. Smite us by the beauty of the life of Christ and subdue us to the perfect sanctions of his will.

Comfort those who mourn and make their sorrow the root of a finer joy. Address the aged, renewing their youth in the immortal hope of fellowship with Thee and enabling them to endure the trial of their waning powers with Christlike composure of heart. Pilot those who are out on the deep waters of peculiar trouble and let their trust in Thee never relax its grip. Bless those souls whom thou hast led into the solitude of the sick chamber, teaching them patience and gallant good cheer. Bless the hearty and healthy men and women who are in no wise afflicted; fill them with gratitude and make them vigorous servants of Thy holy will. Make every home a shelter from temptation and a nursery of noble youth. Make our church a spiritual aristocracy and may it this day commence a grander, deeper, wider life. Have compassion upon the world and hasten the coming of Thy kingdom. And bring us all, by and by, to our Father's home, through the riches of grace in Christ Jesus.—Amen.

with "the things which are unseen," has a hard time keeping our attention?

These machines have created for us a vast and glittering amount of material possessions. We have an almost inconceivable wealth. And temporarily the lure of possessions has "got us." Money and the things money can buy have captured our hearts. The poor man is hardly less subject to its fascination than the rich man, for our whole environment is eloquent of the lure and power of money. Our inevitable tendency is therefore to measure life in terms of what we own. To get, to have, to own, to spend, to sell—verbs like these make up a large part of our vocabulary.

But religion puts all the emphasis on what you *are*. Historically, religion has been almost contemptuous of wealth as such. Read the Book of James and see! Deep down in the quiet places of your soul, what are you? That is religion's insistent question. Religious values are not material values at all. Well now, it is easy to see that religion, being that kind of a thing, will have a hard time with men and women living in a world like ours. The cult of prosperity weans us steadily away from a genuine appreciation of spiritual values.

Demand for Comfort

Another point at which modern life runs counter to the religious appeal is in our demand for comfort. One supposes that no age has ever been exactly in love with discomfort. But certainly no age has ever been so determined to avoid all discomfort as ours. Dr. Bernard I. Bell says that "from twilight sleep to narcotized death we avoid all the bumps. We live in a steam heated, warm-bathed era in which the first request of life is comfort at any cost." From the point of view of comfort, what a blessing the radio is! From a reclining position in an over-stuffed chair we turn the magic knob on a mahogany box, summoning into our presence the voice of the preacher, the music of the orchestra, the song of the entertainer. "Come," says the spirit of 1930, "let us be comfortable."

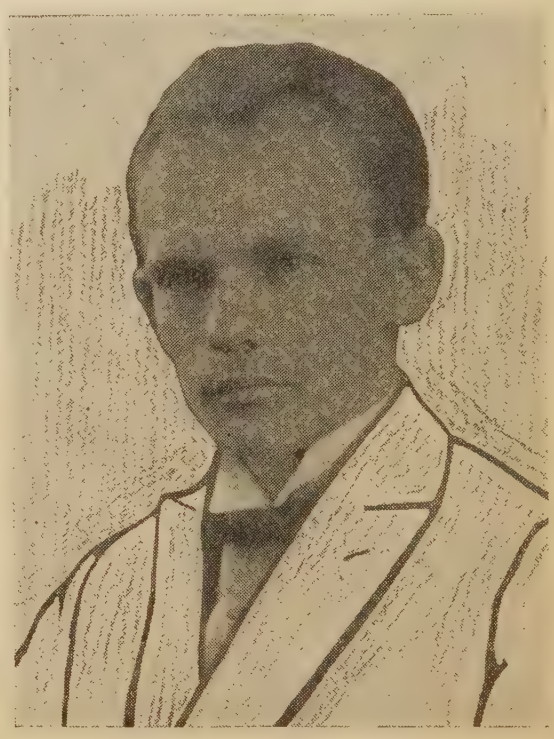
But over against the ideal of comfort, religion sets its appeal for sacrifice. The heart of Christianity is not a warm, comfortable room; it is a bitter cross on a lonely hill. Discipline, self-denial, cross-bearing are inseparable from a genuine religion. Is it any wonder that religion, being that kind of a thing, is not popular in a world like ours?

"Hurry!" says the world. "Take thought!" says religion. "Put money in thy purse!" says the world. "What shall that profit a man if he starve his soul?" asks religion. "Make yourself comfortable!" says the world. "Seek ye first righteousness!" says religion.

That in brief is the situation which modern men and women face. Subtle, powerful counter-forces in our environment, in the very atmosphere we breathe, immunizing us against the religious appeal! What shall we do about it? The first thing to do is to think the matter through to its conclusion. The conclusion of these counter-tendencies—the speed mania, the cult of prosperity, the demand for comfort—is a frankly pagan civilization. At the end of this road is a race of spiritual illiterates. Prayer will be an antique. Worship will be a forgotten practice. The fountain out of which have issued our most humane aspirations and our noblest energies will be dried up. Life will be hard, giddy, unlovely.

The conclusion of religion is a world in which human personality is the most precious thing we know, a world where joy is genuine, where goodwill, beauty, peace and love are potent forces, a world in which Christ is *alive*. Now the critical need today is that we Christians, when we face specific, every-day situations, should think them through and see clearly toward which of these two conclusions we are tending.

Some of us have fallen out of the habit of regular



HERMAN F. REISSIG

worship. Each Sunday morning we have to ask ourselves whether we are going to church or not. And when we face that question, with no strong habit-set to weight the scales in favor of worship, we find the pull of our environment away from the church to be very strong. But let us think it through! Take a square look at the conclusion. Esau, the opportunist, has enough company without adding yours. If you think it through you will go to church to worship, whether the momentary mood is favorable or not. You will say to these counter-influences: "You are very attractive, but I don't like your conclusion. I have thought this matter through. I go to worship."

Parent and Child

Another realm in which long-distance thinking is crucially needed is in the parent-child relationship. Many factors have worked together to change the older attitude of parents toward their children. Young people become financially independent at a much earlier age than formerly. The value of freedom in the for-

mation of character, the sense of the right of the young life to work out its own destiny, the sheer inability of parents to be with their children except for short periods—all these factors have worked together to weaken parental influence. Most of us probably feel that young people should have a larger measure of self-determination than the average child had a few generations ago. But the fact is that many well-intentioned parents have reached the impossible position of abdicating all right of parental influence. What one sees is that parents simply surrender to the spirit of their time, without thinking through this whole matter of their relationship to their children.

A boy of fifteen does not have the foresight and the experience to decide all questions for himself. He needs his father and mother. Even when he protests most loudly that he wishes to do as he pleases, he needs his parents just the same. He may not need the rod. He surely does not need your anger or your iron authority. He does not need a kind of meddlesome fussiness concerning all the details of his life. He does need your firm, loving, constant companionship. It is, of course, not easy to draw the line between the kind of parental influence which weakens character and the kind which strengthens it. Nevertheless, it does not take much insight to see that to sit back and allow boys and girls to decide alone whether or not they shall have a religious education, whether they shall have a high school education or go to work at fifteen, whether they shall come home at twelve or three A. M. is a refusal of the plain responsibility of parenthood. The harsh fact is that many parents in their wish to be broadminded have only succeeded in being weakminded. The church beseeches parents, Christ beseeches them, not to be ruinously short-sighted, but to think this matter through to its conclusion.

Once more, when we find ourselves slipping into some undesirable habit, nothing is more wholesome than to face frankly the conclusion of the matter. The deadly thing about permitting wrong thoughts or actions to recur over and over again is that, after a while, we become reconciled to them. The first time you do a wrong thing it gives you a shock. The hundredth time it doesn't seem to matter much. Your threshold has been lowered, as the psychologist says. Your guards are down. But when you reach that point you are in real danger. For the secret sin will not always be a secret. Some day it will be told abroad from the housetops. Be sure of that!

Logical Conclusion of Habits

So a man had better make up his mind to this, that some time, in one form or another, he will stand face to face with the logical conclusion of his habits, be they good or bad.

If any one of us has drifted into any unclean or dishonest or careless path he had better say to himself now: The conclusion of this thing that I am doing will be a ruined character and bitter suffering for those who love me. Every day that conclusion comes nearer. Nothing can ward it off, except a decisive right-turn. But by God's grace that conclusion shall be avoided, for today I begin to be the man I ought to be!

The cross of Christ is the supreme example of thinking carried to its ultimate conclusion. Why did Jesus submit so willingly to capture, torture and death? An appeal to force would have saved him, at least for a time. Acting on what seemed to be a trustworthy impulse, Peter draws his sword and sheds blood. But Jesus thinks things through. He knows that in the long last he cannot be a saviour to men in their hatred, their pettiness, their violence, unless now, facing the cross, he is true to the covenant he had made with himself and God in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. Thinking it through to the end, he sees that he must love men, pray for them and forgive them, even in the face of unspeakable treatment at their hands. If he saved himself now the final conclusion for him would be oblivion. But dying with a heart clean of hatred and with hands unstained by violence he becomes at last the saviour of men. And because Jesus faced the conclusion of the matter he went willingly to the cross.

The Home of the Soul

By Henry Sloane Coffin

"They said unto him, Master, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see." John 1:38, 39.

ONE never knows a house until one has lived in it. You may be given a full description by its occupants; you may be shown photographs of its exterior and interior; you may examine the architect's drawings, and ask yourself whether it seems comfortably planned; but you must live in it to discover the convenience of its arrangements, the brightness of its rooms, the charm of its outlook, its coolness in summer and its dryness in damp weather, and find how admirably your family fits into it and how hospitable it proves for the entertainment of your friends. Living in a house is an exploration. As life's emergencies arise, the house attests its adaptability or its limitations.

The disciples asked Jesus where he lived, and he invited them to come and see. The narrative concludes with the heavens open above this Son of man. He lived in God.

This was no new home, but the dwelling-place of believers in all generations. And believers have always found it hard to tell less religiously inclined fellow mortals about the home of their spirits. They have spoken of its comfort, of its protection from life's rough weather, of its refreshment for the tired, of its glorious views, of its ennobling companionships with the household of the faithful of all the ages, of its spacious accommodations for the whole race of mankind, of its surprising welcome for the least fit who seek its shelter, of its beauty, of the unshakable hold it has on the affections and loyalties of all who once live in it. But they have never felt that they could ade-

quately describe it. They end any account of it by saying, "Come and see." Unfortunately in every age many know this Home of the soul only by hearsay, and one never knows a house until he lives in it.

God Is Friendly

This Dwelling of man's spirit cannot have seemed home to him until he made the discovery that God is one and friendly. To the tribesmen of Africa and the peasants of Korea the invisible is a realm of numberless spirits to be placated. I asked many Korean Christians what most impresses them in their new faith, and almost always came the answer: "That there is one living and true God, and that he is love." To us that appears elementary. We smile at the heathen who talk about the god of war and the god of peace, the god of the hearth and the god of commerce, the god of one's own land and the god of some other folk. But, despite our smiles at polytheism, do we find ourselves in the same spiritual atmosphere in war as in peace, in our place of business as with our wife and children, with fellow countrymen and with foreigners, in our scientific thinking and on our knees in prayer? Do we use the same principles, appeal to the same motives, rely on the same inspirations?

We fancy that we have outgrown the pagan interpretation of our spiritual Home, which saw the unseen world peopled with a discordant company of many gods, as for example in Homer, where one divinity favors the Greeks and another the Trojans, where three jealous goddesses contend for a prize, where one deity is the defender of Achilles and another the patron of Ulysses. But do we not trust and follow one spirit in our families and another in our business dealings, one spirit in our patriotism and another in our feelings towards men of other races, one spirit in our scientific investigations and another in our acceptance of religious beliefs? Unconsciously we slip back into a crude polytheism. We do not feel that the same Spirit is to be relied on and obeyed in every sphere of life and in our relations with all men. We do not believe that the same motives and incentives which can be used to make a satisfactory home can be trusted in industry and in statesmanship. Instead of holding with the seers of Israel to the unity of God, we are back among the rival divinities who filled the Greek Olympus.

The Parent Faith

Christianity starts with the parent faith of Judaism in one God, of whom and through whom and unto whom are all things. If we adore God as love in our families, we cannot worship him as force in international relations, nor as self-interest in commercial dealings, nor as impersonal energy resident in nature. We cannot revere him as truth in our universities and as tradition in our churches. If to know him as love is true religion for ourselves and our children, and not too good to be our religion, then we cannot think that to know him as less than love and be frightened or fatalistic or unhoping is good enough religion for fellow mortals in Asia or Africa or among the millions of a cosmopolitan city. Our spiritual home is one God, with whom we dwell with our nearest and dearest and with men of other lands and races, one God in whom we have our friendships, form our opinions on public questions, and do our business, one God in whom our life is unified—made all of a piece and all divinely good.

Trinity in Unity

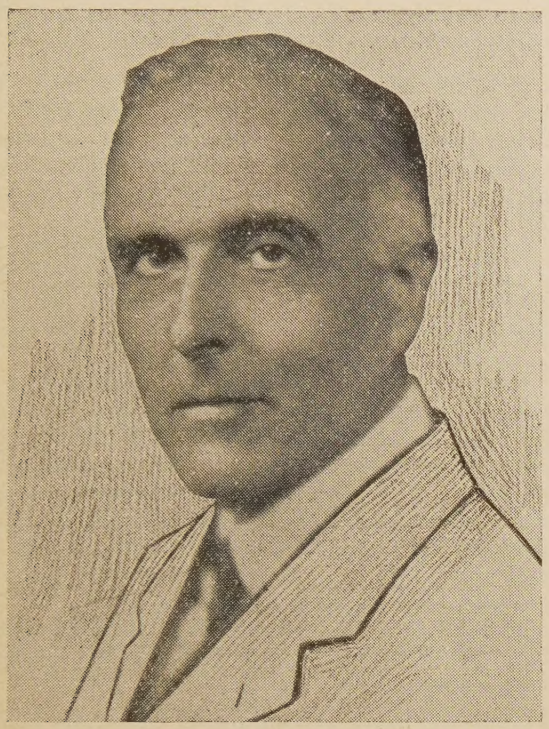
The disciples had believed in the unity of God before they knew Jesus. How came it that, after knowing Jesus and living with him in God, they thought of God as the Trinity in Unity? Why do modern Christians still speak of this Trinity in their spiritual Home?

If we dwell spiritually with Jesus, we look up to the Lord of the universe above and within us as our Father. We recognize that it is a word borrowed from human life, and that the best father or mother our world has ever seen is an imperfect symbol of the wisdom, the resourcefulness, the authority, the devotion of the Most High to whom we apply this name. But it is the word Jesus found fittest, and in our experience we discover that God is fatherly to those who live with him in trust. We give him the confidence, the reverence, the obedience we should accord the best of fathers, and we do not find it misplaced. "Like as a father, so the Lord." He trusts us as fathers trust their children. And he lives up to his obligations, supplying us with the thoughtful care, the wise guidance, the maturing companionship, which dutiful parents give sons and daughters. Outsiders may deride our faith. They may declare that the Force behind the universe seems an indifferent and ruthless Fate; that there is nothing fatherly about it. We can only reply that one can never know a house until one has made it one's home. Jesus lived in God, and has enabled thousands in every century since to live with him in God. He and they, down to ourselves, have found fatherhood there.

So remotely conventional a Christian as George Meredith says in a letter: "I hold to the word 'Father.' No young child can take the meaning of 'Spirit.' We must give him a concrete form or he will not put an idea in what he is uttering. He must address somebody. Later, when he throws off his childishness, he will, if you are watching and assisting him, learn to see that he has prayed to no false impersonation in addressing an invisible 'Father.'"

Those who have lived with Jesus in God have made a further discovery. They have heard Jesus calling himself the Son, and while he has called them his brethren, they have found something altogether unique about him. We have known other men, past and present, in whom we have had glimpses of the divine, but Jesus discloses all we adore in our Father. Spontaneously we find ourselves worshiping him, and according him the same loyalty and trust we offer the Most High. Either we are idolaters, or Jesus deserves the same homage and devotion which we yield to God. This does not mean that we are relapsing into polytheism, as the Greeks worshiped Zeus and Athene, and the Romans Mars and Apollo. The first Christians were Jews, believing in one God, but they saw no incongruity in thinking of Jesus as on his throne. In-

deed, they could place Jesus nowhere else. In a supreme moment one of them addressed him: "My Lord and my God." Jesus is for us the unveiling in a completely human life of the God whom he and we adore. There is sonship as well as fatherhood in our spiritual Home, one Son in whom the Father is completely manifested, and who gives himself as the Elder Brother to



HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

all God's other children to lead us into his sonship with the Lord of earth and heaven.

Nor does this exhaust what Christians discover in their spiritual Home. When they live with Jesus in his Father, they find themselves in a life together in which they become new men, are reinforced with courage and patience, are guided by an inward Voice, are filled with an upwelling life—a life akin to the abounding life of Jesus. This indwelling and upsurging and outflowing Life they call the Holy Spirit. If we are correct in worshiping the Father in Jesus, then this Spirit with us is also God.

Let us borrow an illustration from the discoveries of physics. In 1868 Sir Norman Lockyer, with the aid of the spectroscope, detected on the sun bright jets of gas unlike any known on earth, and gave it the name of helium. In 1895 Sir William Ramsay found this same gas in tubes with which he was experimenting in his laboratory, and noted that helium was non-inflammable. During the war a non-inflammable gas was sought as the fuel for airships, and helium was discovered in large quantities in certain of our western states and Canada. Today it is employed in all our large airships, enabling them to locate their machinery within the ship, instead of in cars hung beneath it, as in the European airships.

You see the analogy. Men had worshiped a righteous and friendly God in the heavens. They found him at their side in Jesus. Through Jesus they found him available as an indwelling Spirit—the light and force of their lives and the corporate possession of the Christian church. They did not think of him as three gods, as the Romans placed Neptune beside Jupiter and Juno in their pantheon. The Trinity was an attempt to combat the polytheism of the pagan world, to assert that God the Home of all devout souls is one, and that in his unity are fatherhood, sonship and indwelling spiritual life.

If you think of it, in our own homes there are three methods by which our lives are trained. The earliest is *regulation*. A baby's life is planned for him and he lives on a schedule. As he grows, there is less regulation and more room for personal initiative. The second is *imitation*. A child is constantly watching older folk and other children and doing as they do. But as he matures, we expect him to be less dominated by the example of others, and to choose his own course. The third is *inspiration*. Boys and girls, men and women, are laid hold on by those who claim their loyalty, and they catch their spirit from them. When father and mother have long ceased to regulate son and daughter, when sons and daughters no longer consciously imitate them, they still live on in the lives that honor and love them.

Christ Our Brother

And we find all three—regulation, imitation, inspiration—in our spiritual Home. As Father, God appoints the circumstances under which we live, and to the end of our days we are in a world largely outside our control. We accept its situations from his hand, and trust his providence. As our Brother in Christ, he gives us a life to follow, a faith to share, a devotion to the brotherhood to make ours as he gave himself for us. Throughout our years that Figure stands before us, beckoning us to become like him. As the Holy Spirit of the Father and the Son, he more and more possesses us, becoming our inmost life, the wellspring of motives and sympathies and purposes. By all three processes—regulation, imitation, inspiration—God redeems us to himself and makes us sharers of his life. We know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in our experience of dwelling in him, the Home of souls.

Theologians, with doubtful success, have tried to carry their explanations further, and tell us how Father and Son and Spirit are related in their spiritual entity. We have always to distinguish between an experience and the explanation of it.

Have you ever looked up the definition lexicographers give us of the verb "to kiss"? Here is what the Century Dictionary says it is: "To smack with the pursed lips (a compression of the closed cavity of the mouth by the cheeks giving a slight sound when the rounded contact of the lips with one another is broken)." Probably that is a correct and orthodox description of a kiss, but what mother would first consult the dictionary and then embrace her baby, or what lover, returning from the momentous experience of being accepted, would find in this definition a satisfactory account of what he had done? Dictionaries are useful volumes in the in-

terest of accurate employment of language. Creeds are useful documents in conserving and clarifying what men have experienced in their life of faith. The statements of the Trinity in Unity preserve what Christians through many generations have discovered who have made their home in God; but few men have first read the statement and then gone to make the discovery, nor having made the discovery, do they find the statement containing all they have found. Our souls take to God instinctively, as a mother kisses her child or man and maid fall in love. No dictionary can ever tell all that is in a kiss, and no doctrinal statement will ever record what God is to those who love him. Only those who with Jesus live in him know.

A Christlike God

The practical question for us is whether we avail ourselves of the riches in our spiritual Home. Descriptions suggest what is there. Some persons get much more out of their homes than others; how much are we drawing from the Home of souls?

Do we rely on God's fatherhood, letting him be the Parent of plans and opinions and interests? Do we defer to his fatherly authority—"Thy will be done"? Do we trust ourselves utterly to his love?

There are many orphan spirits today. Readers of the recently published "Letters of Katherine Mansfield" will recall her wistfulness for God. In her delight in a lovely spot in the Alps she writes: "If only one could make some small grasshoppery sound of praise to *someone*—thanks to *someone,* but who?" And in her mood of need she writes again: "It seems to me that there is a great change come over the world since people like us believe in God. God is now gone for all of us. Yet we must believe, and not only that—we must carry our weakness and our sin and our devilishness to somebody." There is a pathetic orphaned spirit craving a Father. Are you and I thanking him, confessing to him, depending upon him?

Do we use his Self-revealing in Jesus as our invariable thought of him so that our God is really Christlike? Do we think of him as giving himself to and for his children as Jesus suffered for us at Calvary? Do we expect today the same enriching friendship his disciples found in the Upper Room? Is God in Christ the standard of conduct for us?

Ten years ago George Bernard Shaw wrote in his whimsical way: "I am no more a Christian than Pilate was, or you, gentle reader; and yet, like Pilate, I greatly prefer Jesus to Annas or Caiaphas; and I am ready to admit that, after contemplating the world and human nature for nearly sixty years, I see no way out of the world's misery but the way which would have been found by Christ's will, if he had undertaken the work of a modern practical statesman."

Do we obey the unveiling of God's conscience in Christ? Do we believe in the Holy Ghost—in God present and active within us, supplementing our weakness, enlightening our ignorance, moulding our wills, keeping us in unity with lovers of Christ everywhere and equipping us with every grace and gift we need to make our world Christian if we let him? Are we merely God-seekers, or are we God-possessed, God-led, God-empowered?

To believe in the Trinity is to live with Father, Son and Spirit, and to known what God is to those who trust him.

It is heartening to recall that as life advances we grow up into an appreciation of the Dwelling-place of our spirits. Heinrich Heine, born a Jew, has put this developing experience into a chapter of autobiography:

> "Ah, my child," he writes, "while I was yet a little boy, while I yet sat upon my mother's knee, I believed in God the Father, who rules up there in heaven, good and great; who created the beautiful earth, and the beautiful men and women thereon; who ordained for sun, moon and stars their courses.
>
> "When I got bigger, my child, I comprehended yet a great deal more than this, and grew intelligent; and believed on the Son also, on the beloved Son, who loved us and revealed love to us; and for his reward, as always happens, was crucified by the people.
>
> "Now, when I am grown up, have read much, have traveled much, my heart swells within me, and with my whole heart I believe on the Holy Ghost. The greatest miracles were of his working, and still greater miracles doth he even now work. He burst in sunder the oppressor's stronghold, and he burst in sunder the bondsman's yoke. He heals old death-wounds and renews the ancient right. All mankind are one race of noble equals before him. He chases away the evening clouds and the dark cobweb of the brain, which have spoilt love and joy for us, which day and night have lowered on us."

This is one man's exploration of his soul's Home. One never knows what a house is like until one lives in it. "Master, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see."

To Our Subscribers

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THE PUBLISHERS.

The Editor's Page

The Event of the Month

WHENEVER the representatives of the Federal Council of Churches meet to consider how better to do those things which its twenty-eight constituent denominations are trying to do together, we are in the presence of an event of first rank importance to the Kingdom of God. The annual meeting of the council's large executive committee of more than one hundred churchmen was held in Chicago in early December. The Federal council is a cautious body. Its first consideration is the unity of its own organization. Therefore it is held back by the slowest moving of its member denominations. But it faces in the right direction and it does move forward, however slowly. The reports on the various activities of the council have been adequately brought to the attention of Christian Century Pulpit readers in the denominational press. The most important index of progress which I see is a stirring in all our denominational mulberry trees indicative of a desire for a wider and more potent form of cooperation than the present constitution of the Federal council provides for. This is not an outreach of the council for more power, but of the churches themselves for a more adequate agency of cooperative expression. The proposal for a modification of the structure of the council so that it can perform certain functions not now allowed to it was favorably discussed at Chicago, and we dare to hope appropriate action will soon be taken for this purpose.

The Book of the Month

A PREFACE TO MORALS, *by Walter Lippmann. The Macmillan Company.* $2.50.

HERE is a book that every preacher in America ought to read. It contains very little, in the way of positive teaching, that a preacher of the Christian gospel will agree with. It contains much that will shock him and arouse his impatience. At times he will be prompted to throw it down with resentment. I had literally to compel myself to keep on to the end. The book grew thinner and more thin as its thesis unfolded. Why, then, do I recommend that ministers read it? Because it is the clearest reflection of the moral mood of our times which I have come upon. It holds the mirror up to our generation. It removes the veil from the preacher's audience. Too many ministers are merely "delivering themselves" of thoughts which they derived from traditional sources. They preach in a vacuum. Their people are thinking of something else. The sermon does not hook on to their real thoughts. The actual moral problem of people lies outside the scope of most of our homilies. This book defines and plays up in bold relief the moral bafflement of our time. Its chapters are not descriptions of somebody else's moral problems. They are an exhibit of the author's own mind. The moral bafflement of our time is Mr. Lippmann's own. He sees clearly what is happening in others because he is aware that it has happened to himself. The book sets the preacher's real task before him. Let him take this book as a confession of the shallowness, the wistfulness, the hunger, the sophistication, the disillusionment, the thwarted faith, the moral opportunism of our day, and let him preach to it,—not *about* it, but *to* it,—let him say what Jesus Christ has to offer for a generation whose inner life is pictured upon these brilliant pages, and I predict he will get a reaction from his hearers that will feel like the kick of a gun against his shoulder.

A Thought for the Month

A NEW YEAR has opened. Another large unit of time has been rounded out. A new unit is beginning to take form. The sense of starting all over again inevitably arises in our hearts. To the minister this fresh opportunity makes its own peculiar appeal. A new year spells hope—new hope, new faith. And the minister's business is hope. He deals in hope. He is the preacher of a *gospel,* the bearer of good news. He is therefore a man of hope, of faith, not only at the beginning of the year, but all the way through. His prevailing mood is one of expectancy. His job is to create confidence, confidence in life, assurance of God and of the future. Upon him not only does the faith of others hang, but upon him hangs the success of all great causes which depend upon the faith of men and women—and these causes are legion. The minister stands in a unique relation to the faith and conduct of others. They have called him to lead them. He has accepted their call. Leadership in any realm of life, and preeminently in the spiritual realm, is impossible except to men of faith and hope. It is utterly incompatible with cynicism. A cynic may have listeners, but not followers. Many a ministry is today being blighted by the cynical spirit, the spirit of over-sophistication in which the flame of faith has been burned out. God never commits leadership to a Smart Aleck—nor do men. The consciousness that leadership depends upon the possession of faith and hope has its perils. A minister may all too easily professionalize his optimism. He may exhibit it with forced and superficial sanctions, as the Rotarians do, or Polyanna. But his followers, his flock, soon detect this professionalism. For the sake of his leadership, as well as for the sake of his own soul, he must go deeper. He must identify himself with his people on the deeper side of their lives, and he must settle some fundamental accounts with God.

Charles Clayton Morrison

It is the policy of

The Christian Century Pulpit

to anticipate the high days and seasons of the church year, and of our national life, thus providing for the Minister inspiration and suggestion for his own preaching task.

Lent
Easter
Pentecost

are now on the horizon

—Pentecost celebration has already begun!

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